



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

PROFESSOR MUTHER'S THEORIES ON ART *

This is probably the most interesting art history ever written. The style is animated, vigorous and direct. It deals not with dates and details, but with the great movements of human thought. It sees in art a vital manifestation of the spirit of the times. To anyone seriously concerned with the subject, it is more entertaining than any novel.

But, while probably the most interesting art history, it is far from being the most judicious. The author carries to an extreme Taine's view that art is only a product of the age, and does not attach sufficient importance to the unaccountable power of genius. He attains his effects by violent contrasts of light and shade. He belongs to the school of writers that has lately arisen in Germany, who have cast off the old complex, interwoven method of German composition, who express themselves with an almost brutal vigor, and who lay on the lights and shades with scant regard to those delicate gradations, those nice distinctions, that are essential to the accurate expression of the truth.

The author, in order to enforce his principle that art is merely a product of its surroundings, takes the strangest liberties with chronology. For example, in reading his book, you would imagine that there was an age of Savonarola, distinguished by great religious fervor, followed by an age of Leonardo da Vinci, characterized by a pagan reaction; when in fact, both were born in the year 1452, and labored on side by side, exerting their greatest influence at the same time. Or he will indulge in such expressions as this: "But they apply to the art which ruled in Italy from Leonardo to Correggio. The epoch of eroticism and of sensuality was followed by one of unapproachable majesty" (p. 355). And he goes on to treat of Michelangelo. In reality, all of Michelangelo's important works were finished before Correggio died, and most of them were produced while both

* Muther's "History of Painting from the Fourth to the Nineteenth Century." New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1907.

he and Leonardo were at the height of their power. Or he will venture on such generalizations as this: "The fifteenth century, with its taste for sharp, angular lines, loved also in landscape, jagged, harsh outlines, and depicted it in the angular barrenness of its forms" (p. 362). The greatest master of landscape of the fifteenth century was Perugino, and nothing can excel the gracious suavity of the scenes that he depicts; and there were many others who treated landscape in the same way, though with less consummate skill.

In the author's pursuit of the sensual there is something morbid and unwholesome. His attitude is that of a monk, not of a sane, healthy human being. He sees sensuality in the strangest places. The greatest and most refined intellect that ever devoted itself to art was unquestionably Leonardo. So far as we know, he never loved any woman. He was wedded exclusively to his art and to the things of the mind. No picture, no drawing of his, has any taint of sensuality. Even his Leda, if we may judge by the copies that have come down to us, is as pure as a Greek statue. But our author sees in Leonardo only a gross sensualist, who swept the world on to perdition. So, nothing could be more innocent than the sweet joy and youthful beauty that Correggio loves; but to Professor Muther's jaundiced vision he is a monster of perverse eroticism. Amongst all Correggio's delicious pictures there is not one that could offend a normal taste; but Dr. Muther would have them all burned as a menace to public morals. So the aristocratic elegance of Van Dyck, which is so valuable a lesson to us all, teaching us dignity, repose, grace and self-restraint, is in our author's view only a vile degeneracy. To the ordinary mortal these elegant cavaliers of Van Dyck's are types of the perfect gentleman; to Dr. Muther they are weaklings exhausted by their vices, and worthy only of contempt. And strange to say, while he discovers sensuality in the most unexpected quarters, he finds in Titian, the glorious leader of the pagan revival, the high priest of Venus, only purity and lofty aspirations, and he has the highest opinion of Boucher and Fragonard. The statement that to the pure all things are pure is no doubt an exaggeration; but certain it is that purity is not manifested by a morbid search for the impure.

Nothing is more unfounded than the great importance that Professor Muther attributes to Savonarola's influence on art. One would imagine from reading the book that the monk of San Marco revolutionized painting throughout Italy and brought in an era of universal righteousness. In point of fact, he had absolutely no influence on art outside of Florence, and not much there. It is true that he put Piero di Cosimo's quaint pagan fancies out of fashion and spoiled Botticelli, causing him to paint such unpleasant works as the Munich "Entombment" instead of pictures like the "Spring" and the "Birth of Venus." He probably made Fra Bartolommeo more solemn and pompous than he would otherwise have been. He no doubt influenced Michelangelo spiritually, but apparently not in his art; for that deals only with the nude, which Savonarola hated with monkish bigotry. Elsewhere in Italy the painters and sculptors wrought on, wholly oblivious of the monk who was thundering in Florence.

Professor Muther indulges in such unfounded remarks as this respecting Titian: "To this mature old age, long after Giorgione rested under the sod, his most important works belong." In reality, Titian is the greatest of all examples in favor of Dr. Osler's theory. He lived to be ninety-nine, in robust health, painting to the end; but now that we know that his "Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple" was a work of his younger days, we know that all his pictures that are widely popular save the "Venus and the Graces" of the Borghese Gallery were painted in comparative youth.

The author's northern bias is shown by his giving twenty-four pages to Rembrandt and only twelve to Raphael. Not that the twenty-four pages are too much for the mighty Dutchman. On the contrary, every word is good, and we only wish that there were more. But in Raphael he sees only a clever adapter of other men's ideas, and does not realize that while the Prince of Painters was the most receptive of men, he fused all his acquisitions in the marvellous alembic of his genius until the result was a perfect harmony, the like of which the world has never seen elsewhere.

These are a few peculiarities of the work, but there are many more that will strike the judicious reader. Still it is a book

which compels thought, and every one interested in art should read it.

The translation by Professor Kriehn of Leland Stanford University is most admirably done. The English could not be clearer or more vigorous. The translator, however, undertakes to add notes; and as the work will no doubt go through several editions, it may not be amiss to call attention to several inaccuracies. On page 134, Van der Goes' great altar piece is said to be in Santa Maria Nuova. This was true when Professor Muther wrote; but for some years it has been one of the greatest ornaments of the Uffizi. On page 136 this picture is spoken of as an "Adoration of the Kings," when it is an "Adoration of the Shepherds." On page 180, he says, in speaking of Botticelli, "the 'Birth of Venus' is now in the Florentine Academy and the 'Primavera' in the Uffizi Gallery," when the truth is the exact reverse of this. On page 185, he transfers Botticelli's "Entombment" from Munich to Florence. On page 212, he says that Perugino's "Crucifixion" is in the Church of Santa Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi, when it is in the refectory of the Monastery. On page 235, he speaks of driving on a fine afternoon from Florence to the Certosa of Pavia. Evidently Milan or Pavia is intended as the starting point. He calls Leonardo's "Madonna of the Rocks" the "Madonna of the Grotto." This may be very good German, but in English it is apt to mislead. On page 243, Sanazzaro, the great scholar, masquerades as "Sazzanarzo." On page 528, the protruding jaw of the Hapsburgs is transformed into a receding one. On page 578, Goya's "Maya Clothed" is said to be in the Academy of San Fernando, when for some years it has hung in the Prado. It may be very good German to call Fra Angelico merely "Fiesole," as Professor Muther does throughout; but in the English version he should be given the name by which he is universally known among us.

GEORGE B. ROSE.

Little Rock, Arkansas.